

BISHOP'S ADDRESS

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"THE DIFFERENCE THAT CHRIST MAKES"

The 'gospel selection for this Convention Eucharist is St. John's account of our Lord's first miracle at Cana, the turning of water into wine. This was the first miracle of our Lord performed at the beginning of His Galilean ministry, and is only recorded by the fourth evangelist, who understood it to be the first sign of that glorious manifestation or 'epiphany' of Christ in public that was to unfold and reach its culmination in the passion and resurrection. Archbishop William Temple, in commenting on this episode of turning water into wine, helps us to see the significance of this sign by merely noting: the difference that Christ makes. Engagement, involvement, confrontation with Christ brings about a change like that from water to wine. Christian initiation and nurture -- baptism, confirmation, Eucharist -- faith, worship, obedience -- sin, confession, forgiveness -- Bible, creed, ministry -- mercy, grace, justice -- truth, beauty, holiness -- the difference that Christ makes... water into wine.

Some might be persuaded to say that the first miracle the thirteenth bishop of Pennsylvania attempted to perform at the beginning of his Philadelphian ministry was to change the format of the Diocesan Convention. There is no direct equation here; a first century seven day marriage feast does not equal a 20th century seven hour Church convocation. I do not contemplate a watering down or a wine-ing up of convention; I may believe in and talk about miracles, but I don't perform them.

Let me state outright what I believe we are called to be and to be doing at this moment. We, a body of Christians under the oversight of a bishop, who are partially representative of a much larger fellowship of Christians, are endeavoring by the power of the Holy Spirit to do the things that Christians do. We pray and worship, we believe, and we try to live in the way our Lord and Master, Jesus the Christ, sets before us. We have assembled here tonight to worship; tomorrow we will be praying, thinking, and discussing the implications of the Christian faith for living, in an attempt to provide guidance and direction for us and other Christians in this perplexing and rapidly changing society.

WORSHIP IN THE WORLD

Tonight we are 'convention at worship' -- celebrating by and in word and action the birth, life, death, resurrection, and new life of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The bishop has the privilege and responsibility of serving as the principal minister at this occasion of worship -- preaching the word and presiding at the table where the Holy Eucharist is celebrated and Holy Communion administered. Again, I am constrained to say that I believe the bishop, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is called to preach the word -- to make known, by words, something of God's word, the revelation of God in nature, in history, and in human living. This message by the bishop, who is the Church's principal vessel of continuity, unity, liturgy, ministry, and mission in the diocese, is his attempt at collective reflection and judgment. He is not making a state of the nation address or speaking as an individual oracle; but he

is endeavoring to catch up the life and worship, work and witness, of the Church and reflect on God's revelation. This is the difference Christ makes. Although we have gathered here tonight in this lovely and serene place for the worship of Almighty God, we must be sensitive to and knowledgeable of where we are -- in God's world amongst His people. He surely loves all His people and ordains for them all a life of faith, hope and love -- a life of justice, peace and freedom -- a life endowed with sufficient physical and natural resources to make living human and humane, joyous and creative. But we know that this is not the life that the vast majority of people in the world have found or is possible for them. Hunger, poverty, malnutrition -- disease, despair, desolation -- economic, political, social oppression -- hostility, strife, violence are rampant; and it is in this kind of world we assemble here tonight to hear, to reflect upon, and to respond to the difference that Christ makes.

THE UNITY OF DIVERSITY

On several occasions, when landing or taking off from the Philadelphia International Airport and when the visibility allows and the flight pattern is suitable, I have been able to view at a glance the complete geography of the Diocese of Pennsylvania, from Solebury to Oxford, from Bristol to Compass. This experience has hardly been possible with the two other jurisdictions wherein I have served. But here we are -- compact, concise, complete -- a metropolitan area containing a reasonable balance

of urban and rural, near and far suburbs, rivers and valleys, woods and fields, cities and towns -- industrial and commercial enterprises, educational and medical institutions -- rich and poor, old and young, black and white, historic and contemporary -- a little America. Then we move among the people of this area, into the congregations of the diocese -- great variety and diversity -- differences in outlook and attitudes; various orientations and understandings; different ethnic, educational, economic, racial, religious, and political histories. Sometimes we feel and experience the tensions and frustrations, the hostilities and anxieties, conflicts and confusions, people to people within and amongst the congregations showing and manifesting their varieties. Sometimes we find great individual and corporate love and care, deep commitment and concern. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that He who makes a difference, Christ who turns water into wine, wants to take and use these differences and diversities, these varieties and variations, among us for His purposes. He calls us to the only unity, oneness, and wholeness that makes any difference -- to Him. And we can see and find this unity where Anglicans have always found Him and His unity -- in our common Baptism and Holy Communion; in the written record of God's revelation, the Bible; in the historic credal statements of Christian faith; and in the one common unifying ministry of love and reconciliation to which Christ has committed us. This is the difference Christ makes -- His holiness turning the water of diversity into the wine of unity.

AUTHORITY AND HUMANITY

Again, as I survey the area included by the five counties which comprise our diocese and the peoples and the 180-odd congregations to which they belong, I can locate two watery sink-holes, two treacherous swamps, two murky bogs into which we can be sucked and submerged. These two watery mires, these two critical swamps -- authority and humanity -- can be identified by questions.

First, where do we find authority, convincing authority, in which men and women will trust and which will move them to lead lives which will make a difference; and for the Christian community we must add, the kind of difference that Christ's life made and still makes. This watery hole, the authority crisis, has many corollaries and subsidiaries -- the leadership crisis, the constitutional crisis, the institutional crisis, the legislative and judicial crisis. During the past nine months of 1974, just the period since I have been bishop of this jurisdiction, we have had ample evidence in Church and state, in institutional and community life, at every level, to see how critical the question of authority is. We know something of the anguish, the pain, the suffering, the human despair when authority is not recognized, trusted, or regarded or when authority is usurped, abusive, or oppressive. I am not competent to answer all these questions, and perhaps this is not the time or place even to initiate the dialogue; but I am assured of this: God is the ultimate author, the essential and primary authority.

The mother of Jesus simply said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you". He authorized: "Fill the jars with water...Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast". The authority of God the Father, His unmediated reality, His primacy -- Jesus Christ, His continuous and direct intercourse and identification with the Father -- the immediacy and pervading presence of the life of the Holy Spirit -- the Divine authenticity and authorship is recognized and revealed. The authority is trust personified, trustful, and trusted. He, Father, Son, Spirit, is the source of authority; and our concept of authority is inherent in the totality and the wholeness of the Body of Christ. Because we believe Him and in Him, we respond to His truth, justice, and freedom in loving obedience.

Second, where do we find the energy, the power, the resources that will bring life and hope, freedom and love, to the society -- the people of that society -- in which we live? How do we instill and sustain humanness in a society which is so depersonal, degrading, debilitating, and dehumanizing for so many of its members because of their national origin, their political and social orientation, their race, age, sex, or physical handicaps? This is the watery hole of dehumanization, of inhumanness, of depersonalization, of gross insensitivity to persons, to human beings who have been made human by God's love. Where is the respect for human dignity and the recognition of personal integrity? Where is the passionate ethical concern for humanity? The steward of the feast, though he tasted the water become wine, cannot answer the question. "But the servants that drew the water knew." The fact is that Jesus brought in the servants as His fellow workers; He does not keep the healing and the helping and the

saving of the world in His own hands, but offers a share in His ministry to all who will accept it from Him. Personhood is affirmed by and incorporated into Him. His water-to-wine ministry of love and reconciliation has always been so. In Jesus we can find spontaneous and personal communion with God combined with passionate ethical concern for humanity. Both awareness of God and awareness of the world attain their zenith in Him. This is the difference Christ makes.

GOD'S MISSION

"The servants that drew the water knew" is a word to me. There is only one ministry, Christ's; and I am called, commissioned, and consecrated by Him to this ministry of love and reconciliation in and for the Body of Christ. I know His ministry is shared by and with all the members of His Body. The ministries of Christ expressed by some members of His Body are easy for me to recognize and identify, appreciate and encourage. Perhaps it is because these ministries are traditional and conventional, or because they are agreeable to and supportive of my ministry, or because I can bend and shape those ministries to my liking. But all members of His Body are called to serve. I can be a steward of the feast, tasting the water made wine and not recognizing its source. We must be ready to relinquish many of our ecclesiastical and ministerial presuppositions and begin in the beginning with the Holy Spirit. This means humbly and prayerfully watching in any situation in which we find

ourselves in order to learn what God is trying to do there, and then doing it with Him. By His grace, I am thankfully aware of His presence moving across the face of this diocese in a variety of ways, renewing hundreds of people in the power of His spirit. This renewal may fly under a banner, a bumper-sticker or a lapel button; or it may be anonymous. It may be labeled spiritual healing or faith renewed; charismatic, liturgical, or ecumenical movement; missionary concern or social action; Christian education, stewardship, congregational life and purpose; or it may be the quiet, steady, continuous personal growth into the love and life of Christ. The steward, yea, all the guests at the feast, must be discerning and sensitive, endeavoring to discover what God is trying to do with us.

We come back to where we began..."The water that had become wine." It makes little difference whether we take St. John to mean that all the water in the stone pots had become wine, or only that which was drawn by the servants to supply what was needed. This simple story closes with a three-fold climax: "This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana, in Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him." "...and His disciples believed on Him." They believed in Him and on Him. This is the faith which justifies and redeems, reconciles and renews. To believe true doctrine concerning Christ may help us to believe on Him., but our believing is a matter of committing ourselves to Him in personal trust. This is the way of the water into wine and towards the life abundant, a life that is an

abundant life; abundant with a peace that passes understanding and
with a fullness of joy that only He, who makes the difference, can give.